Introduction

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This special issue consists of a collection of eleven peer-reviewed articles, an invited commentary, and a book review. All these items are directly or indirectly relevant to certification of translators and/or interpreters.

The main research question that ties them all together is what constitutes professional competence for a translator or an interpreter and how to demonstrate it.

One thing that everyone seems to agree on is that even an in-depth knowledge of translation theory is not sufficient to demonstrate professional competence. Thus, working translators are usually more interested in practical applications of theory than in abstract theory. However, the first article in this collection (Marais) points out that any assessment is necessarily based on theory, whether implicit or explicit. If Marais is correct, his thesis has implications for both education and certification, and it would suggest that the theoretical and practical branches of translation studies would do well to interact more closely.

The second article (Hlavac) provides a survey of translator and interpreter certification procedures in 21 countries. One conclusion drawn from the research behind this article is that there is actually little consistency in the criteria for certification in various countries. Hlavac raises the question of whether it would be possible to establish common minimum requirements for all certification programs around the world. He notes that over the last decade there has been some convergence between countries that previously relied only on academic degrees as a benchmark of certification and countries that relied mainly on administratively-organized testing as a benchmark. Both academic and externally administered and conferred credentials are now widely recognized as complementary, rather than unrelated attributes. From the macro-level, the process of establishing a common denominator for certification is being led by the implementation of standard practices in certification, such as ISO 17024 (General requirements for bodies operating the certification of persons).

A note about terminology is in order. In Australia and some other English-speaking countries, the term accreditation is used when referring to determining the professional competence of an individual; however, in this collection, the term certification is used instead, and *accreditation* is used to refer to the process of determining whether an organization that certifies translators and/or interpreters has met the requirements of ISO 17024 or some other accreditation standard.

Continuing on an Australian theme, NAATI is the Australian authority for certification of translators and interpreters. A report from NAATI that bears on certification was recently released (February 2013). The title is "Improvements to NAATI testing: Development of a conceptual overview for a new model for NAATI standards, testing and assessment." It can be downloaded from the NAATI website (http://www.naati.com.au/) and complements the articles in the present collection.

The next five articles deal with *interpreter* certification. In one sense they are specific to the United States and Canada, but in another sense they are models for interpreter certification in any country.

The article by Mikkelson discusses the relationship between universities and interpreter certification. Every country must deal with this relationship issue, both for interpretation and translation.

The article by Feuerle provides an overview of the history and current status of courtroom interpreter certification in the United States. Given the importance of this issue, any country that does not already have courtroom interpreter certification would do well to examine and learn from the history of the topic in the United States.

The articles by Youdelman and by Joyce & Arocha both deal with the certification of medical interpreters, also called healthcare interpreters. They describe parallel, US-focused certification programs in the healthcare industry, and, together, provide a comprehensive view of setting up a medical interpreter certification in any country where it does not already exist.

In between clear-cut types of interpreting, such as courtroom and medical, there is a "gray zone" that overlaps with what is often called community interpreting. The article by Bancroft et al. explores the gray zone in the United States and in Canada, but raises issues of broad relevance around the world. Those in other countries could read this article and explore the gray zone for themselves.

The next four articles explore *translator* certification in Europe and the United States:

TransCert, a European Union-funded initiative, is currently developing a Europe-wide translator certification program. I participated in the kick-off meeting for this program on February 4th and 5th, 2013, in Vienna. The article by Budin et al. describes this initiative. It also describes the results of discussions with industry about some of the obstacles that prevent wider acceptance of translator certification and how these obstacles may be addressed in a transnational certification program. (One of the co-authors of the article about TransCert, Arle Lommel, has been extremely helpful in making this special issue happen, both during the beginning stage of this collection and at the end of the editorial process.)

I have invited Arle to contribute a *commentary* about alternatives to translator certification, for balance with the eleven *articles*, which all assume that certification is desirable and could be misunderstood to imply that certification is the only viable indicator of translator competence. Arle's contribution does not pretend to be a typical academic article, but I believe it will stimulate needed serious

discussion within academic circles regarding the commercial translation industry.

During the preparation of this collection of articles over a period of more than a year, I have not encountered anyone who is opposed to certification of either medical or courtroom interpreters. Life and liberty are at stake when hospitals and courts choose an interpreter, and there must be some screening process in the selection of interpreters. Certification is an accepted method of screening[1].

However, certification of translators is more controversial. Some believe that an MA degree in translation from a recognized institution is a better signal of competence than certification. Many translation companies conduct their own testing of translators who apply to do work for them, even though it is expensive and time-consuming. One wonders why they do not currently have more confidence in credentials, such as degrees and certification. Others promote the signing of work by translators and translation companies as an alternative to certification. Arle's commentary on these alternatives should stimulate reflection on whether certification and various alternatives to certification could be combined in practice.

The United States already has a national translator certification program maintained by the American Translators Association (ATA). The article by Koby and Champe describes the current status of the ATA certification program, and the article I coauthored with Koby describes the on-going effort to strengthen the ATA certification program on the basis of ISO 17024. It is my hope that this effort will succeed and result in an ATA certification program that better addresses the concerns of skeptics and that better meets industry needs. These two articles could be used together as a template for documenting and improving an existing certification program in other parts of the world.

The last article (Chan) addresses the point that buyers of translation services have difficulty assessing the quality of what they receive. Using principles of signaling theory from economics, it discusses the uneasy relationship between universities and certification bodies. The question of the proper relationship between certification and academic credentials is far from resolved. The Chan article clearly relates to the Lommel commentary on alternatives to certification and takes a position in favor of universities and certification programs cooperating, rather than competing. I would add my plea for cooperation among methods of signaling translator competence.

The collection ends with a review by Gertrud Champe of Sela-Sheffy and Shlesinger's book about the social status of the "translational" professions. Certification is relevant to the status of translators and interpreters in society.

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[1] As of this writing (March 2013), the state of California is debating Assembly Bill 1263, which would "require the State Personnel Board to determine appropriate testing, training and certification of Medi-Cal [medical] interpreters" (http://www.sacbee.com/2013/03/28/5301002/lawmakers-push-to-unionize-regulate.html)

This collection represents many different perspectives, ranging from scholarly emphasis, to business focus, to the perspective of practitioners in translation and interpreting. Many of the authors are practicing language professionals in addition to their other work (see short bios at the end of this introduction).

Just as any effective certification system must account for the diverse requirements of various stakeholder groups, meaningful discussion of the topic of certification must bring in a variety of perspectives. It is up to the reader to decide whether this volume succeeds in this goal. At a minimum, I hope that it will stimulate much discussion within the field of translation and interpreting, help foster meaningful improvement in translator and interpreter certification programs around the world, and will bring answers, or at least thoughtful investigation, regarding what constitutes professional competence in T&I and how it is best demonstrated to others. Perhaps this collection will even stimulate a turn in translation studies, an *industrial turn*, to complement the *sociological turn*[2].

This introduction ends with a tribute to Miriam Shlesinger (co-editor of the book reviewed by Champe), who recently met an untimely death[3], but who remains highly visible to those who are aware of her contribution to the profession. She will be greatly missed even as her influence will be felt for many years.

Acknowledgments

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[2] For the articles on the sociological turn, see, for example, issue 7:2 of *Translation and Interpreting Studies* (TIS).
[3] http://www.est-translationstudies.org/news/2012_shlesinger.html

Author Biodata

Legend of Acronyms used in the biodata, showing the diverse affiliations of the authors

AILIA
  Language Industry Association of Canada
  (http://www.ailia.ca/AILIA-EN)

ASTM
  Standards body accredited by ANSI (www.ansi.org)
  (www.astm.org)
  Committee F43 deals with language services and products
  (www.astm.org/COMMITTEE/F43.htm)

ATA
  American Translators Association
  "The Voice of Interpreters and Translators"
  (www.atanet.org)

ATISA
  American Translation and Interpreting Studies Association
  (www.atisa.org)

CCHI
  Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters
  (www.healthcareinterpretercertification.org)

CLI
  International Council for the Development of Community
      Interpreting
  (criticallink.org)

DFKI
  German Research Center for Artificial Intelligence
  (www.dfki.de/web -- German and English versions of website)

FIT
  International Federation of Translators
  "The Voice of Associations of Translators, Interpreters, and
      Terminologists, around the world"
  (www.fit-ift.org)

HIN
  Heathcare Interpretation Network
  (healthcareinterpretationnetwork.ca)

IATIS
  International Association for Translation and Intercultural Studies
  (www.iatis.org)

IMIA
  International Medical Interpreters Association
  (www.imiaweb.org)

IoL
  Chartered Institute of Linguists
  (www.iol.org.uk)

GALA
Globalization and Localization Association
(www.gala-global.org)

ISO
  (http://www.iso.org/)
  Technical Committee 37 deals with terminology and other language
    and content resources

LISA
  Localization Industry Standards Association
  (closed its doors March 2011)

NAATI
  National Accreditation [certification] authority for Translators and
    Interpreters
  (www.naati.com.au)

NAJIT
  National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators
  (www.najit.org)

NBCMI
  National Board for Certification of Medical Interpreters
  (http://www.certifiedmedicalinterpreters.org/)

NCIHC
  National Council on Interpreting in Healthcare
  (www.ncihc.org)

SSTI
  Society for the Study of Translation and Interpretation of the
    National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators
  (http://www.najit.org/about/committees.php) [attached to NAJIT]

TISAC
  Translation and Interpreting Summit Advisory Council
  (www.tisac.org)

UNESCO
  United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organzations
  (www.unesco.org/new/en)

Brief biodata on the authors, focused on connections with T&I (Translation and Interpreting)

(1) Izabel S. Arocha

- Connections with T&I
    - Holds a Certificate of Translation, Cambridge University, England
    - Co-Founder of the National Board of Certification of Medical Interpreters
    - Interpreter Professor and Lecturer for several universities (Osaka University, Boston University, Cambridge College)
    - Active in several standards bodies, including ASTM F-43 and ISO TC 37
    - Active in several professional associations of translators and interpreters
- Main Activity
    - Executive Director of the International Medical Interpreters Association (IMIA)
- Secondary activities
    - Freelance interpreting
    - PhD candidate at Osaka University
    - Secretary General of the International Federation of Translators (FIT)
    - Secretary of FIT North America

(2) Marjory A. Bancroft

- Connections with T&I
    - Member of industry groups ATA, IMIA, NCIHC, ALC, IATIS, and CLI
    - Development and delivery of interpreter training curricula and guidelines for government and nonprofit agencies
    - Participation in the development of national/international interpreting standards
- Main activity
    - Director of Cross-Cultural Communications, a national community interpreter training agency
- Secondary activities
    - Training/curriculum development for cultural competence, working with interpreters and language access
    - Executive Director of a nonprofit that supports interpreting for survivors of torture, trauma and sexual violence

(3) Lola Bendana

- Connections with T&I
    - Vice-Chair - and Member of the Executive - AILIA
    - President of IMIA
    - Member of AILIA, HIN, ATA, CLI
    - Active in the development of standards for translation and interpreting (Canadian standards and ISO standards)
- Main activity
    - Director at Multi-Languages Corporation, a language service provider located in Toronto, Canada

(4) Jean Bruggeman

- Connections with T&I
    - Co-Author, *The Language of Justice: A Manual*, comprehensive training for interpreters working in non-courtroom legal settings
    - Trainer for interpreters (spoken and signed languages) working in legal settings
    - Trainer for legal professionals working with spoken and signed language interpreters
- Main Activity
    - Attorney with expertise in immigration, domestic violence, human trafficking, and language access
- Secondary activities
    - Training and technical assistance for legal professionals and interpreters working in legal settings

(5) Gerhard Budin

- Connections with T&I
    - Has done research in terminology studies and other areas related to translation for over 25 years
    - Holds the UNESCO Chair for Multilingual, Transcultural Communication in the Digital Age
- Main activity
    - Full professor for terminology studies and translation technologies at the University of Vienna, Center for Translation Studies
- Secondary activity
    - Director of the Institute of Corpus Linguistics and Text Technology at the Austrian Academy of Sciences

(6) Gertrud Champe

- Connections with T&I
    - Member ATA and ATISA
    - Retired professor of Translation
- Main activity
    - Freelance translator and editor
- Secondary activities
    - ATA Certification Program grader, German to English
    - Member ATA Certification Committee

(7) Andy Lung Jan Chan

- Connections with T&I
    - IoL-certified English-Chinese translator (Business & Social Science)
    - Member of various T&I organizations (such as IoL)
    - Doctoral dissertation looked into information economics and translator certification
- Main activity
    - Lecturer of translation at City University of Hong Kong
- Secondary activity
    - Freelance English-Chinese and Chinese-English translation

(8) Lois M. Feuerle

- Connections with T&I
    - ATA-certified German-to-English translator
    - Member of various T&I organizations (ATA, NAJIT, FIT, SSTI, TISAC representing SSTI)
    - Member of the NAJIT Certification Commission
    - Former Coordinator of Court Interpreter Services for the states of Oregon and New York
- Main Activity
    - Freelance translator (German to English)
- Secondary activities
    - Consulting on language issues and domestic violence
    - Teaching legal translation in the University of Chicago's T&I Certificate Program at the Graham School of General Studies

(9) Jim Hlavac

- Connections with T&I
    - Interpreter and translator who has traversed the path from child lay-interpreter to NAATI to
    - Professional interpreter (Croatian-English) and professional

translator (Croatian to and from English, German to and from English)
- o Member of various T&I associations in Australia
- Main Activity
  - o lecturer in Translation and Interpreting Studies at Monash University (Melbourne, Australia)
- Secondary activity
  - o Freelance translation and interpreting

(10) Linda Joyce

- Connections with T&I
  - o Certified medical interpreter (Spanish - by the NBCMI)
  - o Member of T&I organizations (IMIA, NCIHC, ATA, FIT)
  - o Participant in development of national medical interpreter certification exams in the U.S. as a Subject Matter Expert
- Main activity
  - o Certification and Testing Director, NBCMI
- Secondary activity
  - o Remote interpreter (over the phone) and interpreter trainer
  - o Language Access Services Consultant

(11) Geoffrey Koby

- Connections to T&I
  - o ATA-certified German>English and Dutch>English translator
  - o Member of ATA, Grader, ATA certification examinations, and Chair, ATA Certification Committee
  - o Member and past president, American Translation and Interpreting Studies Association (ATISA)
- Main activity
  - o Associate Professor of German and Translation Studies at Kent State University (Institute for Applied Linguistics)
- Secondary activity
  - o Commercial, legal, and financial translation, German/Dutch to English

(12) Zita Krajcso

- Connections with T&I
  - o PhD in interpreting German, Russian and Hungarian
- Main activities
  - o Lecturer at the University of Vienna, Center for Translation Studies
  - o Project manager of European-Union funded projects in the field of language didactics

- Secondary activities
  - Voluntary interpreter in the field of medicine

(13) Arle Lommel

- Connections with T&I
  - Has worked in the T&I industry for over 15 years
  - Was Director of Standards at LISA
  - Participates in the work of various standards bodies
- Main activity
  - researcher at DFKI in Berlin (on projects related to translation)
- Secondary activities
  - Working with GALA on various translation-related projects
  - freelance Hungarian-to-English translator (specializing in musicology)

(14) Kobus Marais

- Connections with T&I
  - SATI-certified translator (English to Afrikaans)
  - Has translated about 20 books in the genre of popular religion
- Main Activity
  - Teaches translation and translation studies in the Department of Linguistics and Language Practice at the University of the Free State in Bloemfontein, South Africa
- Secondary Activity
  - Freelance translator

(15) Alan K. Melby

- Connections with T&I
  - ATA-certified French-to-English translator
  - Member of T&I organizations (ATA, FIT); chair of TISAC
  - Participant in development of T&I standards
- Main activity
  - Professor of linguistics at Brigham Young University
- Secondary activity
  - Freelance translation (would like to do more)

(16) Holly Mikkelson

- Connections with T&I
  - ATA certified S>E & E>S, exam grader
  - Certified judicial interpreter & translator

- o U.S. Administrative Office of the Courts, certified federal court interpreter, former exam rater
- Main activity
  - o Adjunct professor of translation & interpreting, Graduate School of Translation, Interpretation & Language Education, Monterey Institute of International Studies
- Secondary activity
  - o Freelance translator & court interpreter

(17) Mara Youdelman

- Connections with T&I
  - o Has worked on language access health policy issues for over twelve years at the federal level
- Main Activity
  - o Founding Chair of CCHI and still serve as a Commissioner
- Secondary activity
  - o Health policy advocate, working to increase access to and quality of healthcare for low income and underserved populations.